

THE ARMSTRONGS OF INDIAN TERRITORY

By Carolyn Thomas Foreman

PART II

William Armstrong

William Armstrong, the second member of the family to be represented in the Indian Territory, was the son of James ("Trooper") Armstrong and his wife, Susan Wells Armstrong. He was born about 1800, and is said to have participated in the Battle of New Orleans. President Jackson appointed Armstrong superintendent of Indian affairs in the Western Territory, and he was important in the removal of the Choctaws and Chickasaws from Mississippi and Alabama to the Indian Territory.

On July 2, 1832, William Armstrong was appointed Special Agent and Superintendent of the removal of the Choctaws from their homes east of the Mississippi River.¹ On the same day his brother Major Francis Wells Armstrong received a like appointment for the removal of the Indians from the Mississippi River to their new home west of Arkansas.

During Choctaw removal the country was almost devastated by an epidemic of cholera. Francis W. Armstrong reported from Nashville that he and his wife had just recovered from an attack, and that business in Tennessee had been entirely suspended. William Armstrong had tried in vain to get a doctor to accompany the Indians who were distracted with fear of cholera. He went with the members of Chief Mush-olatubbee's party who were obliged to struggle through a swamp for thirty miles with the water from knee to waist deep. Armstrong reported that that party had "been sorely handled with sickness and very many deaths."²

The *Arkansas Gazette*, reported that Captain William Armstrong, Superintendent for the removal of the Choctaws east of the Mississippi had passed up the river a few days previously, from Nashville, for the western Choctaw Agency, near Fort Smith.

¹ William Armstrong married Nancy Irwin in Nashville, July 1, 1823, when she was nineteen years old. They became the parents of: (1) Mary Elizabeth Armstrong; (2) James Trooper Armstrong; (3) David Irwin Armstrong; (4) Margaret Armstrong, born 1829; (5) Susan Wells Armstrong; (6) Nancy Irwin Armstrong; (7) Francis Armstrong. Mrs. William Armstrong died September 28, 1836.—Zella Armstrong (compiler), *Notable Southern Families* (Chattanooga, 1926), Vol. 3, p. 15. (For biography of Francis W. Armstrong by Carolyn Thomas Foreman, see "The Armstrongs of Indian Territory," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXX, No. 3 (Autumn, 1952), pp. 293-308.)

² Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, 1932), pp. 75, 77, 79, 80.

On December 4, 1833 an exploring party of twenty-two chiefs of the Chickasaw Nation arrived at Fort Towson and sought a council with the Choctaw chief in regard to buying a part of their land. A meeting was arranged on the twenty-first when two-thirds of the Choctaw chiefs and headmen met the Chickasaw delegation. Choctaw Agent Armstrong urged the delegates to reach an agreement by which the two tribes could live together. The Choctaws refused to sell but agreed to make a home for the Chickasaws on their domain. This did not please the Chickasaws and no agreement was reached until a third effort four years afterward.³

Mosholatubbe's party of Choctaws reached Memphis on November 3, 1832, and crossed the river the same day. William Armstrong had tried in vain to get a physician to travel with the Indians, so he accompanied them himself and they were seven days making forty-two miles through a swamp where they were compelled to struggle from knee-deep to their waists in water. Five hundred of Mosholatubbe's people attempted to emigrate without assistance from the government. They crossed the Mississippi at Memphis on the way to Fort Smith, but after struggling through the swamp for forty miles they gave up further effort and built rude shelters and tried to keep alive by hunting. In the middle of December, William Armstrong found them; he had them conducted to St. Francis and started them to Fort Smith under the leadership of Wharton Rector.

The worst flood ever before known on the Arkansas River overflowed the banks of the stream during the first week in June, 1833. The high water mark of this flood, it was reported by Armstrong, would be visible for years, and the Choctaws who had settled along the river would have to hunt for the places where their houses had stood.⁴ Their crops had been swept away, and the people had been ruined. The government corn cribs near the Choctaw Agency were washed away, and the Indians both those who had already settled in the region and the new immigrants from Mississippi were on the point of starvation before Agent Armstrong could borrow corn from the army rations to feed them. A month after the flood, a boat load of corn arrived from the Creek Nation for which Armstrong had to pay \$2.50 a bushel to prevent his charges from starving. To relieve the distress of some of the Choctaws the next winter (February, 1834), William Armstrong borrowed five hundred bushels of corn. He wrote to General Arbuckle at Fort Gibson: "The situation of these people is really worse than I thought when I saw you. . . . the women and children, many of them according to what they say, and from appearances have been from 4 to 6 days without anything to eat. . . ."

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-01.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99. Armstrong reported in June, 1833 that it was impossible to supply flawless copies of the registers of the Indian reservations (George Dewey Harmon, *Sixty Years of Indian Affairs* (Chapel Hill, 1941), 234.

William Armstrong and his assistants worked through September and October, 1833, among the Choctaws in the old nation, to overcome their opposition to removal. He went from house to house trying to get the Indians to go to a rendezvous at the Agency, but many of them left home and refused to have anything to do with him.

After great labor Armstrong had succeeded in inducing about two thousand Choctaws to depart with him, when an Indian arrived from the West with a report that the people who had removed the previous year on their own resources were to be paid ten dollars each by the government. This caused half of the people who had signed to go with the government agents to decide to leave without assistance so that they might collect a like amount on their arrival in the West. This information, according to Armstrong, had been sent by some traders who wished to have the new arrivals spend their money in trade with them.

Armstrong wrote ". . . I know that we have done all that could be done to get them off. I feel the disappointment, yet, I am confident that there will be thousands remaining after we leave, and all those who will emigrate on their own resources."⁵

William Armstrong of Nashville, Tennessee, succeeded his brother, Major Francis W. Armstrong, as Choctaw Agent and Acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Western Territory in 1835. Eight years later, on December 26, 1843, he was confirmed by the Senate as Superintendent and held the office until his death at Doaksville, near Fort Towson, June 12, 1847.⁶

In June, 1835, Acting Superintendent William Armstrong reported to the authorities in Washington that the "Western Cherokees" were opposed to the proposed treaty being acted upon by the eastern portion of the nation. Armstrong wrote that it was his duty to inform the department ". . . that these people are dissatisfied, and will, I have no doubt, object to the views of the government in uniting the Cherokees, unless they can have their wishes, which, I assure you, are not to be found in the treaty intended to be held before the Eastern Cherokees. . . ."⁷

Agent Armstrong wrote to Commissioner Herring on July 18, 1835, that he had collected ten Choctaw lads and put them in charge of John Millard who was to start for Kentucky the next day to escort the boys to the Choctaw Academy. The Indians had become prejudiced against the school and Armstrong declared that they would soon refuse to allow their sons to be sent there.⁸

⁵ *Indian Removal*, op. cit., p. 100.

⁶ Ethan Allen Hitchcock, *A Traveler in Indian Territory*, Grant Foreman, ed., (Cedar Rapids, 1930), p. 62, note 41.

⁷ *House Executive Document No. 185*, Twenty-ninth Congress, first session, pp. 31, 32.

⁸ Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "The Choctaw Academy," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March, 1932), p. 78.

The subject of liquor in the Indian country was one of the utmost importance in maintaining order. A letter addressed to Acting Superintendent William Armstrong by General Arbuckle on April 8, 1836, states that Ezra Williams and Elias Goddard, white men, or citizens of the United States, residing in the Cherokee Nation near Fort Gibson, "have been guilty of a violation of the Act of Congress regulating trade and intercourse with Indian Tribes approved the 30th of June, 1834."

There had been found in the house of Williams two barrels of liquor, one of brandy, one of rum and the General gave the names of three soldiers as witnesses. About twenty-five gallons of whisky were discovered in Goddard's house as witnessed by three soldiers of the Seventh Infantry. Later, the same day, Arbuckle sent another letter to Captain Armstrong telling of the case of Jesse Scott who lived on the Bayou Menard and was reputed to be a Cherokee, "but is generally understood to be about equally in blood with the whites, Cherokees and Africans.—There was found at his house on or about the 9th of March, 1835, two barrels of whiskey." Witnesses in this case were three sergeants of the Seventh Infantry, one of whom was N. B. Dannenberg who testified "that said Scott has a long time kept liquor on hand for sale to Cherokees and others at his residence. . . . particularly since the first of May last."⁹

This trouble apparently smoldered as a feud in the region, for some years later (June 24, 1844), J. H. Heald wrote the following in a letter to Agent Armstrong:¹⁰

A terrible murder was committed a few days since upon the summit of the dividing ridge between Arkansas & Red River, on the military road leading from Fort Smith to Fort Towson. . . . It appears that a family was returning from Texas to Arkansas or Missouri, and with them two persons names Goddard & Burgess. The latter led a horse, and when they reached Ki-a-mi-chi, a stream about twenty miles from the dividing ridge towards Red River, he persuaded Goddard to leave the wagon as they could travel at a faster rate by riding and walking alternately, and they accordingly left the wagon, which proceeded on and overtook a second wagon, and enquiry was made if such two persons had passed, when they were told that in the night while the second wagon was encamped at the foot of the ridge on the Arkansas side, they heard the report of a pistol or gun, and towards morning horseman came up, and took breakfast and passed on. Owing to the peculiar circumstances, the parties went back to the summit, and found some persons had encamped there, and also found some articles of dress which were identified and bloody. Upon a further search, a plain trail was found where some body had been dragged, the rocks occasionally spattered with blood, and at a distance of some 200 yards from the road a fire was discovered, and the charred remains of a human body. . . . leaving no doubt but Goddard had been murdered and the body burnt. He was known to have some eighty or an hundred dollars, partly in Missouri money, while Burgess it is said was nearly destitute. The family where Burgess took breakfast, state that he made enquiry about

⁹ National Archives, War Department, Fort Gibson Letter Book.

¹⁰ Office Indian Affairs. West. Suptoy. File A 1639-1663-1675. Choctaw Agcy. 1844. A 1663.

the value of Missouri money, stating that he had been at work in Texas for a man named Burgess, and had received some Missouri money in pay. Burgess is well known by the emigrants, pursuit was immediately made and no doubt he is apprehended.

The Act of Congress of June 30, 1834, regulating trade in the Indian Territory gave rise to controversy and trouble through the years. Two months before the murder, supposedly of Goddard, on the military road from Fort Smith to Fort Towson, Agent Armstrong had written to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. Hartley Crawford (April 19, 1844), as follows:¹¹

Capt Dawson informs me that he has been instructed by the Department that those white men in the Indian Country who have Indian wives, have a right to trade without a license.

If the Intercourse law admit of such a construction, it evidently requires amendment, for the whole of its provisions for the regulation of the Indian trade, are thereby virtually defeated. A white man whose application for a license may have been refused, has but to marry an Indian to place himself on higher ground than the licensed trader occupies; for if he cannot be prevented from trading, of course he cannot be removed from the Indian country, as the licensed trader can, whenever it is improper for him to remain.

Any man, no matter how worthless, that has goods, can get an Indian wife, and friends among her people. If such persons are independent of the Agent and untrammelled by the regulations, respectable traders will be supplemented by the very class which of all others it has been the object hitherto to exclude from the Indian Country. . . .

I have never supposed that those who were married to Indian women were exempt from any of the restrictions imposed upon other citizens. And I have never on the other hand thought it right or expedient to withhold from a sufficient number of our countrymen the privilege of trading with the Indians. . . . White men have been excluded in order to restrict the privilege to the Indians themselves. This course in my opinion is not just either to our own people, or to those whom it professes to benefit. . . . It has the effect of throwing the monopoly into the hands of a few of the more intelligent, which the majority, those who most require the guardian care of the Government, are sure to suffer from.

While a guest in the Agency, Susan W. Armstrong, daughter of Robert W. Armstrong of Nashville and a niece of the Choctaw agent was married May 13, 1836 by the Reverend Cephas Washburn to Lieutenant Arnold Harris of New York. Robert W. Armstrong served as a brigadier general during the Florida War, as council to Liverpool, which was one of the most important posts in the diplomatic service of the United States, and as postmaster of Nashville. He was a friend of President Jackson which accounts for the many appointments to public office of himself and his two brothers.¹²

¹¹ Office Indian Affairs: Western Supt'y A 1639-1663-1675. Choctaw Agcy. For biography of Dawson, see James H. Gardner, "The Lost Captain," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXI, No. 3 (September, 1943), pp. 217-49.

¹² Robert Armstrong was born about 1790, and died in Washington in 1854. General Andrew Jackson bequeathed him his sword.—Joseph Thomas, *Universal Pronouncing Dictionary of Biography* (Philadelphia, 1888); Grant Foreman, *Advancing the Frontier* (Norman, 1933), pp. 65-6.

From the Choctaw Agency, May 23, 1836, Seminole Disbursing Agent J. Van Horne (Third Infantry), wrote to General George Gibson in Washington City that:¹³

... Supt. Col. Armstrong told me on my arrival here yesterday that he had postponed his departure to Red river a day or two to have an interview with the Sem.[inoles]. It had been my design to have gone four miles beyond here last evening. In compliance with the suggestion of the Supt. however I encamped here to afford him this interview.

This morning they availed themselves of this pretext and could not by no means be restrained from a talk with him. The wife and daughter of Black Dirt 2nd Chief and Tustenuggee Harjo principal warrior had just died. They begged urgently as usual to be allowed to lay by for the day. Col. A. [Armstrong] seemed to think the circumstances required it, and much against my will I yielded when at the conclusion of the interview, I found them obstinately bent on remaining.

Captain Jacob Brown, U. S. Army, wrote to General Gibson on June 2, 1836, that he was just in receipt of a communication from Lieutenant J. W. Harris, disbursing agent for Seminole removal, saying that those Indians would not be removed that year. As a result of the information, Special Agent Armstrong had left for Nashville.¹⁴

On July 14, 1836, Armstrong wrote that he had "dispatched Mr. Clarke to Red river to procure ten boys [Choctaws for the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky] which he did and during his absence I obtained the remainder in this district and succeeded in getting the boys off—on a Steam Boat on the 9th of this month."¹⁵

Specifications for the building of the Choctaw council house were advertised by William Armstrong in the *Arkansas Gazette* on June 8, 1836 and a contract was let to William Lowry to construct the building. Superintendent Armstrong took great pains in getting looms and spinning wheels for the Choctaws, but their arrival was delayed because the government refused to pay the high transportation rates from the East where they could have been made in a short time. A contract was let to Robert Baker in the Choctaw Nation who made 220 wheels and eighty-eight looms for the Pushmataha District, but there was great complaint because of Baker's delay in getting out the wheels and looms so the Indians could convert their cotton into garments of which they were much in need, so Armstrong cancelled the contract and the Choctaws did not receive these tools for several years.

Acting Superintendent Armstrong reported to the commissioner of Indian affairs in 1836 that the Red River section of the Choctaw Nation was "destined soon to be a fine cotton-growing country; the

¹³ Office of Indian Affairs. Seminole Emigr., File 67-68-69. Choctaw Agency, 1836.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Capt. Jacob Brown, Dis. Agent. Reports and Accounts of Supplies.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Schools (Choctaw) A39, etc. Choctaw Agency, 1836.

native traders have erected cotton gins, and they purchase all the cotton that is raised by the common Indians and half breeds. . . .” This interesting report gives a picture of the manner in which the Choctaws were prospering and advancing in civilization.

Armstrong wrote a request for “slates and pencils, Smilie’s arithmetics, cyphering books, copy books, Webster spelling books, Parley’s geography, and 12 dozen good quills” for the Choctaw schools in 1836, showing an increased interest in the education of the young Indians.¹⁶

Superintendent Armstrong was anxiously awaiting to hear that the 1836 annuity for the Choctaws had been forwarded to Captain Brown because “the season of the year for fall hunting is close at hand and the Indians are extremely importunate to receive their money before they set out. . . . I have not seen any appropriations for Coal for the different shops, this is an article extremely difficult to procure in the Indian Country where labor is very high.”¹⁷

From the Choctaw Agency, August 31, 1836, Acting Superintendent William Armstrong addressed a letter to C. A. Harris, Commissioner of Indian Affairs:¹⁸

Sir: The first party of emigrating Creeks are now on the opposite side of the river Arkansas, on their way up. I shall leave tomorrow so as to meet them at Gibson; while there I will see the McIntosh party and endeavor to learn the state of feelings amongst the several parties. Many threats have been made; and much dissatisfaction manifested by both Chilly & Rolly McIntosh, the latter has sworn to kill A-po-the-ho-lo (*sic*) who was concerned in taking the life of his Father General William McIntosh.

Rolly McIntosh and the other Chiefs now over, are opposed to Ne-amath-la the Chief who is with the party now emigrating, upon the ground mainly that they may probably be superseded, or their authority abridged. I will however report to you, fully, after I shall have informed myself, of the state of feeling &c, and will endeavor with Genl. Arbuckle, to bring about a reconciliation.

The faction of the McIntosh Creeks who had emigrated in 1829 became upset when a hostile portion of the tribe approached the home in the West and violence was threatened if the newcomers attempted to establish a government for the entire nation.

General Arbuckle and Armstrong arranged a meeting at Fort Gibson between Chief Roley McIntosh, Eneah Amathla and Eneah Micco who had recently arrived, together with other chiefs and headmen. “The new arrivals who had lost everything they possessed were warned that their annuity would be withheld from them unless

¹⁶ Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman, 1934), pp. 30-32, 34, 45. Note 33.

¹⁷ Office Indian Affairs, Choctaw Agency 16 August 1836. Wm. Armstrong to Carey A. Harris Esqr. Comms. of Ind. Affrs.

¹⁸ Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist* (Cleveland, 1915), p. 193.

they met the wishes of the government officials''. Under that pressure they agreed to recognize McIntosh as chief and live under the government already established in the West.¹⁹

September 1, 1836 Armstrong forwarded to Commissioner Harris the bid of William Lowry for building the Choctaw Council House and houses for three chiefs under the 20th Article of the treaty of 1830.

You will perceive that Ten thousand dollars is the amount for building the above houses—with three churches, to be used as School houses for the three school teachers provided for under the same article.

The churches used now as school houses, are just completed—the two last by Mr. Lowry—and the first one was erected by Robert Baker during the life time of my brother F W Armstrong—as a sample building for the different school houses within the nation. Bids for the construction of the above structures had appeared in the *Arkansas Gazette* on June 8, 1836.

Articles of Convention and Agreement concluded at Doaksville near Fort Towson on January 17, 1837, between delegations representing the Chickasaw and Choctaw people, in the presence of Superintendent Armstrong, stated that it was agreed by the Choctaws that the Chickasaws should have the privilege of forming a district within the limits of their country. This district was to be bounded as follows:²⁰

Beginning at the north bank of Red river, at the mouth of Island Bayou, about eight or ten miles below the mouth of False Wachitta, thence running north along the main channel of said Bayou to its source; thence along the dividing ridge between the Wachitta and Low Blue rivers to the road leading from Fort Gibson to Fort Wachitta; thence along said road to the line dividing Mushalatubbee and Pushmatahaw districts; thence easterly along said district line to the source of Brushy Creek; thence down said creek to where it flows into the Canadian river, ten or twelve miles above the mouth of the south fork of the Canadian; thence west along the main Canadian river to its source, if in the limits of the United States or to those limits, and thence due south to Red river and down Red river to the beginning.

In 1838 Agent William Armstrong, sent out a force of men to cut and make a road located by an exploring party to the depot (later noted as Boggy Depot) on Boggy Creek so that the emigrating Chickasaw Indians could get through to their new homes (*Indian Removal, op. cit.*, p. 99). Their removal was doubly laborious because they had lost thousands of their horses and oxen with which they had started from the East.

The Cherokees proposed annual general councils and one was held in October 1837, which was attended by the Creeks, Senecas, Senecas & Shawnees, Quapaws and Ottawas. Major Richard B. Mason

¹⁹ *Indian Removal, op. cit.*, p. 157.

²⁰ *Constitution Lands and Treaties of the Chickasaws* (Tishomingo City, 1860), pp. 203-05.

was at Fort Leavenworth while he learned of the meeting and he at once notified General Gaines at St. Louis that he feared trouble. The General, always an alarmist, called upon the governors of Kentucky and Tennessee for ten thousand troops to meet the Indians.²¹ Indian Superintendent William Armstrong was too ill to attend the council, but he hastened to assure the War Department that there was no foundation for the sensational reports as the meeting was peaceful in all respects.

Agent Armstrong selected the lads who were to attend the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky and he showed great judgment in the students he sent to the school. This is shown by the useful work done by these young men after their return home. A number of them were able to fill important positions and by their ability they advanced their people in many respects. During the last years the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky was in operation there was great complaint among the Indians because of the lengthy period their sons were away from home. This resulted in schools being started in the different nations.

William Armstrong dismissed one of the teachers in the Choctaw Nation in 1837 as he had made himself so unpopular with the Choctaws. He replaced this man with Thompson McKinney, "one of the young men who returned from Col. Johnson's school, he is intelegent and very well qualified, having acted in the capacity of an assistant at the Choctaw Academy, and comes well recommended by the Revd. Mr. Henderson who is the principal. . . ."²²

William Armstrong, acting superintendent of Indian affairs in the Western Territory, on April 23, 1838, sent a letter to the commissioner of Indian affairs, dated Washington City saying: "When General Jussup called upon volunteers to go to Florida, he promised them all the *property* they could capture. Accordingly, the Creeks captured near *one hundred negroes*, which they left in the possession of the officers of the United States. *What has become of these negroes? Will they receive them, or their value, as promised?*"

The disposal of these Negroes resulted in a voluminous correspondence, and on May 9, 1838 Commissioner C. A. Harris addressed a letter to Captain S. Cooper, acting secretary of war in which he wrote that a decision had been made requesting that "the negroes captured by Creek warriors in Florida, should, in compliance with the engagement of General Jussup, be delivered to the Delegation now here, has been communicated to them with the intimation that, when they had determined what disposition would be made of them . . . the necessary orders would be issued. . . ." The Indians selected

²¹ James W. Silver, *Edmund Pendleton Gaines* (Louisiana State University Press, 1949), p. 153.

²² Foreman, "The Choctaw Academy" *op. cit.*, p. 90.

their attorney, Nathaniel F. Collins of Alabama to receive the slaves. The Creeks had refused an offer of \$8,000 made them under direction of General Jessup.²³

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Harris notified the Reverend Thomas Henderson, superintendent of the Choctaw Academy on May 7, 1838, that William Armstrong would visit the Academy with a delegation of Creek and Choctaw Indians.²⁴

When the hostile Creek Indians were brought from Alabama to the Creek country west of Fort Gibson in 1835, they were embittered by the recent war, and were opposed to white missionaries among them. On one occasion a missionary sent to the Creeks by the Methodists was accused of misconduct, and a meeting was held at Fort Gibson by the Creek factions when it was decided to forbid the churchmen to remain in the Creek country. An order for the missionaries to leave the Creek country was issued by Acting Superintendent William Armstrong, living at the Choctaw Agency sixty miles distant. He gave the order as he feared the hostiles would incite the frontier to an Indian uprising. The order was sudden and unexpected, according to the Reverend Mr. Fleming, a missionary of the American Board, who went to see Armstrong to refute the charges made against him, but he found General Arbuckle, there as acting agent, who informed him that in Armstrong's absence, he had nothing to do but enforce the order.²⁵

In October, 1838, Captain William Armstrong and General Matthew Arbuckle were commissioned to hold a treaty with the Creek Indians to adjust claims for the great losses they sustained during their enforced removal to the West. Although the meetings began in October the treaty was not signed until November 23 as there had been adjournments from time to time.

After the reestablishment of Fort Towson a post higher up Red River had been under consideration. Recommendations had been made by General Arbuckle, Col. James B. Many, and Francis W. Armstrong, who was then Choctaw agent, in 1833. Major William Armstrong first suggested a fort near the mouth of the Washita in 1838, and he repeated it on March 30, 1841 because the Texans had established Fort Johnson on Red River opposite the mouth of the Washita, and they threatened to cross over and punish the wandering bands of Choctaws.²⁶

²³ Joshua R. Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida* (Columbus, 1858), pp. 196, 199, 202.

²⁴ Office Indian Affairs, School File, R. 258.

²⁵ Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance* (Norman, 1941), pp. 117-18; and Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* (Philadelphia, 1851), p. 612.

²⁶ Henry Putney Beers, *The Western Military Frontier* (Philadelphia, 1935), pp. 107-08, 161.

In his report to the commissioner of Indian affairs in 1838 William Armstrong wrote a most comprehensive and intelligent account of the Indians under his jurisdiction. He described the state of the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles; wrote of their health, emigration, schools, the introduction of whiskey and status of white traders among other subjects. He also gave an interesting description of the Neosho Sub-agency, embracing the Senecas and Shawnees, and the Quapaws.²⁷

From the Choctaw Agency West, Armstrong wrote Commissioner of Indian Affairs J. Hartley Crawford on December 5, 1838:²⁸

"Sir I have been endeavoring to get the Indian boys collected to send on to school in Kentucky. I find it more difficult to procure them than at any previous time, I was unable to get them in the Summer owing to Small Pox prevailing through the Indian Country, there is still a few cases existing amongst the Choctaws. . . . The Cherokees have refused sending their boys, so have the Quapaws. . . ."

The Choctaw Chief, Pierre Juzan, of Pushmataha District, wrote to Superintendent Armstrong of the loss of four of his Negro slaves, four horses, saddles, bridles and guns by a party of Mexicans who had been in the nation a short time. Armstrong notified the Indian Office, saying the loss is a great one and calculated to have a bad effect among the Indians as "it strikes at those who have property and influence, who are always able to lead others on. . . . Col Juzan writes under excited feelings he is a brave determined man, and from his heavy losses I fear will be hard to restrain. . . ." ²⁹

While only about a dozen Chickasaw families had risked settling in the exposed country assigned by their treaty at Doaksville with the Choctaws, Superintendent Armstrong reported that these Chickasaw families felt assured that his recommendation for the building of a fort near the mouth of the Washita would be carried out, and they began settling in the fertile valleys of the Blue, Washita, and Boggy rivers where they raised corn and other products which they sold to the garrison when it was finally established as Fort Washita in 1842.

In addition to his duties as Agent to the Choctaws whose Agency at Skullyville was his home, William Armstrong's supervision as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Indian Territory extended far west over the Plains tribes in this region. Camp Mason or Chouteau's Trading post, near present Lexington on the Canadian River, was generally the meeting place for delegations from these western tribes. The Agent for the Osages, Paul Leguest Chouteau (brother of A. P. Chouteau who owned the trading post) wrote of disturbed conditions among the Comanches and other Plains tribes:

²⁷ This report covers ten closely printed pages (479-88) and it is too long to use in an article concerning Captain Armstrong.

²⁸ Office Indian Affairs, "School File A 506 Armstrong, Wm. Supt. West". See also *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 10, No. 1 March, 1932, 105-06, for a further account of the celebrated Choctaw Academy in Kentucky.

²⁹ Office Indian Affairs, Choctaw File A 571. 3/18, 1839.

Camp Mason

Feb. 1, 1837

Majr Wm Armstrong
Superintendent Indian Affrs &c.

Sir

On my arrival here after having seen you last at Fort Gibson, I found that during my absence, the Chouteau Establishment at this place, had been visited by the Comanche Chief *She-co-ney* with a small party of his tribe. They had been waiting for some time to see me, but eventually made their departure before my arrival, manifesting much anger; and declaring a determination to be revenged on the whites, for many supposed injuries received by them since and commencing at the time of the Council held with them at this place, in 1835.

They were also careful to notify the Osages to be absent during the ensuing Spring, as they were determined at that time to destroy this establishment together with its inhabitants. *She-co-ney* the Chief referred to, it will be recollected as the Principal one of his nation in the year 1835, at this place, signed a treaty with the Commissioners of the U.S.

Some short time after my arrival here, I induced my son Edward Choteau to visit the Comanches at their wintering grounds South. During his absence, the reports I had already received to them were confirmed to me by *Wee-che-tas* & *delawares*, the last of whom had already experienced the displeasure of the Comanches. . . .

With regard to the White women & children prisoners to the Comanches . . . I have had opportunities to receive information. At the village of *She co ney* are two English women who have resided a considerable time in the U. S. The name of one is Mrs. Martin who reports her youngest children to have been killed because unable to walk with the party who made them captives.

There are others among the *Kioways*, *Tow wee ash* and other tribes, I have ascertained the names of some to be Richards, Parker & Frost. . . .

Your humbl Sev't

P. L. Choteau

U. S. S. Ind Agt for Osages.

Colonel A. P. Chouteau had been authorized to conduct a party of prairie Indians to Washington to meet President Van Buren so that they might be impressed with the power of the United States. They were to meet Colonel Chouteau at Camp Mason about May 1, 1839, but he died in the meantime. However, John Connor, a Delaware interpreter, conducted a party of seventeen men and women of the Comanche and Kiowa tribes to Fort Gibson early in June ready to pursue the journey to the capital. General Arbuckle sent them to Superintendent William Armstrong at the Choctaw Agency; who informed them that the government was ready to keep the promise made them, but he discouraged starting at that time of year as the season was too far advanced and their health would be endangered from a strange climate and diet as well as confinement aboard stages and steamboats.³⁰

Superintendent Armstrong wrote to Commissioner of Indian Affairs T. Hartley Crawford, from Fort Gibson April 25, 1839,

³⁰ *Advancing the Frontier, op. cit.*, pp. 104, 163.

explaining that the Cherokees were not accustomed to living entirely on beef and asking that part of the ration be bacon which could be procured in Cincinnati or New Orleans. Armstrong was in Fort Gibson trying to locate the Seminoles, according to instructions from Crawford.³¹

This *Document No. 219* (Hitchcock's suppressed report), is largely made up of correspondence arising from difficulties of satisfying the Indians with the rations supplied by contractors and Captain Armstrong exchanged many letters with the Commissioner and the firm of [James] Glasgow & Harrison of Little Rock, Arkansas, which had a contract to furnish supplies for the Indians. *The Little Rock Gazette* reported:³²

Capt. Wm. Armstrong, at present Superintendent of the Western Territory, has been appointed Principal Disbursing Agent, for the U. S. Government on this frontier, in the place of Capt. R. D. C. Collins, whose term expires in July, under the law passed at the session of Congress before the last, declaring that no officer of the army should hold an appointment in the disbursing department.

This appointment will meet the approbation of everyone acquainted with the new incumbent, altho' our citizens of all parties will regret the necessity which will remove from among us an efficient public officer and an amiable man, who has passed many years in this community.

William Armstrong left his headquarters at Van Buren, Arkansas and hurried to Fort Gibson because of the trouble among the Cherokees. He arrived there July 2, 1839, and joined General Arbuckle in urging Chief Ross to end the proceedings of the National Council until an arrangement could be made for a meeting of the entire nation. This was not successful and Armstrong appeared before the council where he found only a dozen "Old Settlers" among about two thousand Cherokees. He informed that the western chiefs were willing to meet in a general council but Chief Ross declined to treat on that basis, but a meeting of western chiefs, "Old Settlers" and other Cherokees met at the mouth of the Illinois River on July 22.³³

Armstrong notified the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 29, 1839, that G. P. Kingsberry, acting agent for the Chickasaws, died near Fort Towson on July 24. He was buried with military honors at the fort. Kingsberry was a son-in-law of Governor Henry Dodge.

³¹ House of Representatives Executive Document No. 219, twenty-seventh Congress, third session, 133. Following the above letter was a short communication written at Bushyhead, April 16, 1839, and signed by Hair Conrad, William Proctor, Stephen Foreman, and Bushyhead and several other Cherokees, regarding "the suffering of our people on account of the scantiness of the ration issued to them . . . the quantity of provisions is entirely too small, and the supply has been exhausted long before the arriving of the issuing day . . ."

³² *Army and Navy Chronicle*, Washington, D.C. May 16, 1839, 316 copied from *Little Rock Gazette*.

³³ Morris L. Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation* (Norman, 1938), pp. 22-3, 30-3, 37, 55.

Doctor Lewis Fields Linn, senator from Missouri was his brother-in-law. "I knew Mr. Kingsberry well and he had not only the capacity and firmness to discharge his duty, but he combined that sterling honesty for which he was so highly esteemed."

Armstrong was of the opinion that the object of the visit was to effect payment of the invested fund belonging to incompetent Chickasaws, "which they have already twice petitioned to have done. The withholding of this money has created very great dissatisfaction against the Commissioners by the Common Indians. They complain that they were promised payment by Col. Reynolds and their commissioners, when they should reach their new homes. Such is the dissatisfaction that the Commissioners who declared the Indians incompetent feel very uneasy. . . ."³⁴

General Arbuckle and Acting Superintendent William Armstrong wrote to Principal Chief John Ross from Fort Gibson, September 28, 1839 that they had been instructed by the War Department to arrest and bring to trial the murderers of the Ridges and Boudinot. "We believe that you can have the persons charged delivered at this post, without resorting to other means, which it is our wish to avoid. Should we be disappointed in our expectations in this particular, the military force of the United States will be employed in carrying out the instructions of the War Department. . . ." In a lengthy letter Ross replied: "None of the persons charged with the act you instructed upon are known to me; some of them may be of the late emigrants, or all for ought I know; . . ."³⁵

In the autumn of 1839, Superintendent William Armstrong sent the following petition from the petition from Ish ta ho tapa and other leading Chickasaws to Commissioner Crawford:

It has now been several years since the Treaty between our Great Father and the Chickasaw Tribe of Indians, and nearly all of our lands have been sold, and agreeably to our Treaty, we have moved to the far west. We are anxious that a Delegation of three of our chiefs or head men with our Agent be permitted to visit our Great Father at Washington this fall or early winter. . . . We have several reasons for wishing to see our Great Father.

One is we have never seen him and of course never taken him by the hand, except through his agent who is now with us and with whom we are much pleased; Another reason is that we are placed entirely on the frontier and surrounded by various bands of hostile Indians such as refugee Cherokees, Kickapoos, Caddoes, Delawares, Shawnees & Comanches, and we wish to know of our Great Father if he will not have some of his men placed at some suitable situation in our District to protect our lives and property, both of which are at the mercy of these roving bands . . . in the old Nation . . . we were surrounded by sharpers and

³⁴ National Archives. Office Indian Affairs. Chickasaw File A 694-706 Choctaw Agency.

³⁵ Emmet Starr, *History of the Cherokee Indians* (Oklahoma City, 1921), pp. 133-4. Major Ridge and his son John Ridge and Elias Boudinot were murdered June 22, 1839, in reprisal for having signed the so-called treaty of 1835.

whiskey sellers. Our expenses . . . cannot be much when there will be only three delegates and this expense will of course come out of the funds belonging to the Chickasaws." The signers were:

his
Ish ta ho ta pa x King.
mark

George Colbert, St[e]lone Love, Ish le mo lut ka, James Colbert, Pistalabby, Hi ah che tubby, Jackson Kemp, I so Ka ah, Charles Colbert, James Gamble of the Choctaw Nation West, Pitman Colbert, Isaac Albertson, Billy McGillvarry, Lemuel Colbert, John Glover, Tecumseh Brown, [and a number of others, most of these men signed by mark].

The controversy between Chief Ross and the Treaty Party continued for several months and there was even an effort made to divide the Cherokee territory and annuities. The Treaty party delegation composed of William Rogers, Stand Watie and John A. Bell wrote Superintendent Armstrong from Washington on January 22, 1840, proposing "a division of the Cherokee country and annuities between the old settlers and treaty party, together with all such as may choose to join them on the one part, and John Ross and his party of the other Part."³⁶

When the Reverend R. M. Loughridge reported on his trip to the Creek country from Eutaw, Alabama on February 17, 1841, he wrote the Board of Foreign Missions of his stay at the Choctaw Agency in November, 1840. He mentioned his kind reception and entertainment by William Armstrong³⁷ who appeared interested in the success of the mission to the Creeks and who furnished him letters to the Creek Agent James Logan and General Roly McIntosh.³⁸

Main Canadian March 13th 1840

Capt Wm Armstrong
Friend & Brother

We the Chiefs of the Upper Creeks wrote to you some time since concerning the Apalachicola Band of Indians that are now residing within the limits of our country; we have never received any answer from You. they are a separate people from us & does not receive any part of the benefits arising from the United States coming to our people; there is One hundred & forty four of them in number of which Coha thlockoo or Cockrane is thare head man we in the behalf of Said Coha thlockoo and his people pray the Compliance of a Treaty made between James Gadsden on the part of the United States & John Blunt Osaa Harjo or Davy & Said Coha Thlocco made & concluded at Tallahassee in the Territory of Florida on the Eleventh day of October 1833, as they have Complied on there part Coha thlocco is the only one of the assigners of Said treaty now living his people are in a delorable Situation a good many of them are naked and has no means by which they can obtain Subsistance You will please urge the necessity of our Father the President of the United States to have the appropriation made for there relief and forwarded as Soon

³⁶ Report, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1840, p. 236.

³⁷ Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Report of Reverend R. M. Loughridge," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Autumn, 1948), p. 278.

³⁸ Office Indian Affairs: Creek File Main Canadian, 1840. The spelling of this document is given as written by the Indians.

as possible You can refer to Said Treaty and See the Stipulation of which Said Apalacha cola Band has complied on their part Your Speedy attention to this will be more than thankfully received by witness

Your Friends & Brothers

James L. Alexander

Opoethlo Yoholo

his
x
mark

Tommarthla Micco

"

Cochar Tustenugga

"

Tuckabacha Micco

"

James Islands

"

Tuttenugga Emarthla

"

Nehaw motta Tuskenehaw

"

From Main Canadian, March 30, 1840 Chief Opotheyoholo of the Creeks addressed a letter to Captain William Armstrong which read as follows:³⁹

Friend & Brother

I must again trouble you to address a few lines to the Government about Twenty years ago there was a Treaty made between Lewis Cass & Duncan McArthur as Commissioner of the United States and the Shawnees & Six other nations which you can see by referring to the Treaty, the Head Chief of the Shawnees, is now at my house where he has been residing even since last Winter, he starts tomorrow in the Chickasaw Nation in search of his people, where they have been since the War Broke out in Texas, he expects some time this year to bring his people to this nation for the purpose of becoming one of our people, in consequence of his people having been so much scattered they have become very poor, the Treaty which they made secured to them forever two thousand Dollars a year which amount he says that himself & people have never received the first Dollar, therefore you will please represent the case to the Government and ask the favour of them to send there Anuity to this Country with the Creeks Anuity for we will by fall become one people.

Your friend & Brother

Opoethleyoholo

his
x
mark

Witness

Jas. L. Alexander

"Under your instructions the agent for the Seminoles (Col. Logan) has removed the tribe to the new location on the Deep Fork of the Canadian agreed upon between the Creek Chiefs, Genl. Arbuckle & myself. Some cabins erected some land broken & fenced &c."⁴⁰

Fort Gibson Arks

5th August 1840

To. T. H. Crawford, Com of Indian Affairs

Sir

I have the honor to report that I have had a council with the Seminoles and selected a delegation for the Florida Expedition. They are anxious to make the trial, and enter into it with great confidence. I explained

³⁹ *Ibid.*: Creek File. Tuckabatchee, 1/2/1840. Original spelling retained.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: Creek A. 829. Wm. Armstrong to Secretary Crawford, July 7, 1840.

to them why they did not occupy the country that was granted to them by treaty—

I am now waiting for Capt Armstrong he is expected every day. I shall endeavor to start immediately on his arrival, and if he is not ready he can follow on afterwards. When Indians get ready to start to any point, they soon get tired if they are detained long.

With respect John Page
 Capt. 4th Infy⁴¹

From the Choctaw Agency, June 13, 1841, Armstrong sent the following news to Commissioner of Indian Affairs T. Hartley Crawford:⁴²

A party of Seminoles numbering about Two Hundred have just arrived in charge of Capt. McKavett, of the Army. They will proceed to the Deep Fork of the Canadian, in a few days. There are now [here] two parties making 400 drawing rations.

The Seminoles that have emigrated show a bad state of feeling, and unless care and attention is taken of them, they will do little towards making any thing towards supporting themselves, after the year is out.

They have many difficulties about negro property and require some person to be with them that understands the character of Indians, and has firmness enough to act, I conversed with the Creek Chiefs in relation to the Seminoles, they will give them to understand distinctly that they are to be peaceable, as they are now neighbours living in the same country, they feel themselves somewhat responsible for their good conduct.

The Creeks are working and doing well, and may be the means of doing some good for the Seminoles, who are indisposed to labour. Those who went out to the Deep Fork of the Canadian last year are making some corn.

Alegator who resides about eight miles above Fort Gibson in the Cherokee Country is using his influence to induce as many of the emigrants as they arrive to join him, so as to give him strength.Alegator should be removed from the Cherokee Country, and placed with the other Seminoles. It is expected that the Cherokee Council will take some action upon the subject.

The transportation of funds to pay the Indians always involved great anxiety to the officers in charge. It was almost impossible to secure large sums of currency on the frontier and many times it was necessary to go to New Orleans for it. William Armstrong had a hazardous experience when the steamboat *Cherokee* on which he was traveling from New Orleans burst a boiler and sunk in less than an hour. Fifteen or twenty passengers were killed and many persons wounded. Armstrong escaped with little injury, but he was greatly concerned over recovering the large sum of specie packed in kegs:⁴³

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: Florida File P. 824 &c. Ft. Gibson. 1840. P.824.

⁴² *Ibid.*: Seminole (Emigr.) File A 1024-1035. Choctaw Agcy. On July 6, 1841 Armstrong notified the Commissioner that he had made a contract with Robert West to subsist the Seminoles on the Deep Fork and those scattered through the Creek and Cherokee country. These Indians had promised to unite at Deep Fork in the autumn.

⁴³ *Advancing the Frontier, op. cit.*, pp. 303-04 and note 6.

. . . . I succeeded in getting out the specie in kegs, amounting to over \$100,000. I had a small box of gold and a box of dimes and half dimes in the clerk's office for safe keeping. The box of gold was blown on shore, splitting in two, and only ninety dollars lost. The box of dimes fell on the bow of the boat and split entirely into pieces. . . . I saved the entire funds of the government with the exception of one hundred and fifty-one dollars. . . . Had I been killed I have no doubt the greater part of the money would have been plundered. . . . I was detained some days in a very uncomfortable situation watching the specie until the boat came along and relieved me.

Armstrong was in charge of one hundred and forty thousand dollars of government funds and was able to save all but \$141.00 although everything else was lost and the captain and engineer of the steamboat died within a few days. He forwarded a certificate from Alexander MacKinney, pilot of the boat, confirming his statement. He asserted, "It is well known that the loss would have been much greater but for the most arduous efforts on my part, and I trust that the amount will be placed to my credit without objective from any quarter."⁴⁴

In Pilot MacKinney's account of the wreck he stated that the money intended for disbursement to the Indians was packed in twenty or thirty kegs of specie which were placed in the main cabin, and two boxes containing gold and silver deposited in the clerk's office for greater security. He reported that Captain Armstrong had taken passage at New Orleans for the Choctaw Agency and while the boat was lying at the landing at Lewisburgh, one of her boilers burst. The fore part of the cabin was carried away, and with it, the clerk's office:⁴⁵

I was blown ashore. The box of gold fell near me. The cover was split. . . . Several pieces (half eagles) had fallen out. All that I saw I handed to Capt. Armstrong. . . .

The other box fell on the bow of the boat and was dashed to pieces. The contents, dimes and half dimes, were scattered in every direction. I saw Capt Armstrong picking them up. . . . The boat sunk an hour or two after the explosion. It was a total loss. . . . No part of the cargo, except the public money was saved.

Superintendent William Armstrong's report for 1841 was mainly devoted to the progress of education among his charges. Regarding the Choctaws he wrote: "Two of the teachers are young ladies, of about eighteen years of age, native Choctaws. They conduct the schools and deserve great credit for their ability and exertions in behalf of their people. They speak the Choctaw language, and have the entire confidence of the nation."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Office Indian Affairs: West. Supty. File A 1675. Armstrong to T. Hartley Crawford, commissioner Indian affairs.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: Western Suptcy. File A. Choctaw Agcy. A-1675.

⁴⁶ The two young teachers were undoubtedly Lavinia Pitchlynn who reported from Eagle Town and Tryphena Wall who taught at Mayhew. Their sub-reports are on pages 324 and 326 of the *Report* for 1841.

Charges were made that contractors who furnished rations to the emigrant Choctaws had defrauded them and that traders in the nation were overcharging them, so Major Armstrong made an investigation at Boggy Depot, where there were two trading firms, and he examined their books. He was astonished at the vast quantities of goods the Chickasaws bought in these stores, but he learned that they traded them to the Choctaws for cattle, horses, hogs, and other things they needed, "and thereby made the wealth they brought from the East contribute to the prosperity of both tribes." Armstrong was well pleased with the appearance of the Indians, and acquitted the traders of wrongdoing.⁴⁷

When Major Ethan Allen Hitchcock visited Fort Gibson in the autumn of 1841, he dined at the home of Arnold Harris of New York, the husband of Susan W. Armstrong. They had been married at the Choctaw Agency May 13, 1836, while she was visiting her Uncle William. Harris was then sutler at Fort Gibson. Besides Mrs. Harris there was a sister, Miss Armstrong of Nashville. Hitchcock remarked on their beauty.⁴⁸

On December 1, 1841, Issuing Agent Geo. W. Clarke wrote to William Armstrong from Fort Gibson regarding the party of Seminoles that had arrived there on November 12. He had great difficulty in getting them over the river, but with the assistance of Micanopy and other old settlers they agreed to move on to Deep Fork. However, the next day a blizzard overtook them and they refused to proceed and made camp opposite the mouth of Grand River. Clarke stated "they are well affected" and he had no doubt but that they would move as soon as the weather moderated.⁴⁹

Captain Clarke notified Superintendent Armstrong on February 6, 1842, that when "Co ar coo chee" ("Wild Cat," a Seminole) and his party landed at Fort Gibson, he was required by Colonel R. B. Mason, the commandant, to remove them to the south side of the Arkansas within the Creek Nation. As Armstrong and Creek Agent Logan were absent from the post, he, Clarke was obliged to take the responsibility for the expense of the move: "The persons who engaged waggons; and owners of the ferries are becoming anxious to receive their money, some of whom are importuning me daily for it. . . . hoping that you will have the money sent out at an early day. . . ." ⁵⁰ Superintendent Armstrong notified Crawford that these Seminoles had been furnished with coffee and sugar, rice,

⁴⁷ *Advancing the Frontier, op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁴⁸ *A Traveler in Indian Territory, op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁴⁹ Office Indian Affairs: Seminole (Emigr.) File A-1135 etc. Choctaw Agcy. 1841. A-1141. This party numbered 200 when it left Florida under Captain W. Seawell, and 197 arrived in the west.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: Seminole (Emigr.) File. Ft. Gibson. 2/6-1842. A portion of Coar-coo-chee's party numbering seventy, located in the Cherokee Nation about three miles south of Fort Gibson.

molasses, spirits, bread and meat from the time they left Florida, and they were dissatisfied with the rations they were receiving at that time.

A letter from Creek Agent James Logan to Superintendent Armstrong dated April 6, 1842 gives a picture which should have brought the blush of shame to government officials connected with the Indian Office:⁵¹

I met the Chiefs of the different Towns yesterday at Poseys Landing in order to make the distribution. When they learned that the whole amt. had not been received by me And that two bales of domestic. . . . were rotten case No. 45 containing 1000½ yds Linsey was in the same condition and several bales of the Blankets were too much injured for them to receive all—They refused to receive any part of them I have stored all the goods that I have taken from Fort Gibson in a good dry ware-house at Poseys Landing. . . .

I have taken only three hundred and sixty of the Rifles and them I have issued the others are at Fort Gibson—I will send you the receipt for them when I send my quarterly return—

The letters you sent me gave information that Capt. J. L. Dawson was in nomination for Creek Agent and I have no doubt but he is appointed I have information confidentially that it is the Intention to continue the proscription of the democrats till [all] are removed—

I will send you my receipt for the goods that I have received when I have them examined by men who are acquainted with Merchandizing say Mr. Wilson and Mr. Harris—The receipt will be in accordance with the condition of the goods—have taken six boxes of Hatchets or little axes marked for the Creeks but have no bill for them—The Tuckabatchy chiefs are determined to receive no part of the goods or money due them for losses—more than I have already paid them. The Interest on the Steamboat losses I paid some time ago. . . . 208875\$ On my arrival home the chiefs set the time that they would meet and receive goods—. . . .

I am today to meet Wild-cat and the Seminole Chiefs at Fort Gibson to try to settle a difficulty about a Seminole being found dead near the fort—the Seminoles pretend to believe that the man had been killed by a Soldier. . . .

Capt. Hunter is nominated to succeed Col. H. Rector E. Rector could not be nominated his political opinions were not right.

Yours truly

James Logan

General Zachary Taylor, accompanied by Captain William W. S. Bliss and Agent Armstrong attended the "Grand Council" assembled on the Deep Fork of the Canadian River in May, 1842. General Taylor addressed the Indians through interpreters and urged them to maintain peaceful relations with each other. The General spent two days at the council and reported: "None but the most friendly feelings were exhibited toward the United States, and all seemed animated with a desire to cultivate peaceful relations with our Government and with each other."⁵²

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: I. T. Misc. James Logan, 1842. This communication was addressed to Armstrong at the Choctaw Agency, Western Territory.

⁵² Holman Hamilton, *Zachary Taylor Soldier of the Republic* (Indianapolis, & New York, 1941), pp. 150-51.

This was a most picturesque affair with the wild Indians in their strange costumes. When the tribes were assembled the civilized tribes arose *en masse*, formed in single file, headed by General Rolly McIntosh and followed by General Taylor, Captain Armstrong and various agents of the different tribes. These officials shook the hands of the wild tribes before speech making commenced. Captain Armstrong was one of the speakers who addressed the meeting through Interpreter Benjamin Marshall of the Creek Nation.⁵³

Cherokee Agent Pierce M. Butler reported in 1842 that the political situation in the nation was still unsettled and he feared that any excitement would bring on serious trouble. Superintendent Armstrong discouraged any outside interference in the affairs of the nation as he believed they could handle their internal difficulties.⁵⁴ Pierce M. Butler was a candidate for the position given to William Armstrong, but he was made Cherokee Agent.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that all of the agents under Acting Superintendent Armstrong addressed their annual reports to him except Butler who sent his directly to Commissioner of Indian Affairs T. Hartley Crawford, which showed that feeling still rankled with him.

In Armstrong's *Report* for 1842, he wrote:

The Choctaws have long since acquired for themselves, not only from the Government of the United States, but with the citizens with whom they have intercourse, a name of honesty and fidelity at least not surpassed by any of our Indian tribes." It would be difficult to find a finer tribute to any nation than this. "They have not been unmindful . . . of educating the rising generation; and they have, by this means, added to the general intelligence and standing of the nation.

Armstrong wrote that Doaksville was within a mile of Fort Towson, and that it was the most extensive trading center. There were five stores, three of which were owned by part Choctaws. The other two were the property of United States citizens licensed as traders.⁵⁶

The stocks of goods are large, and the assortments such as are usual in stores. Sugar and coffee are used by all classes in the nation, to an extent at least equal to the whites. It may not be uninteresting to state that the village of Doaksville is one of the most orderly and quiet towns that you will find in the West. . . . There is a resident physician, a good tavern, blacksmith shop, wagonmaker, and wheelwright. A church

⁵³ *Advancing the Frontier, op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁵⁴ Wardell, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁵⁵ Agent Upshaw warned Major Armstrong that Pierce Butler was planning to succeed him as Indian Superintendent when Henry Clay was elected president. Butler was so sure of Clay's election that he offered to wager four mules on the result. When it was learned that Polk had been elected Upshaw proposed to meet William Armstrong and his brother Robert in Washington to celebrate with "oysters and drink a glass of wine."

⁵⁶ *Report*, Commissioner of Indian affairs, 1842, pp. 438-39. It is to be regretted that all of Armstrong's reports can not be included in this sketch as they are interesting and give a graphic picture of the people.

has also been erected. . . . a temperance society is also organized, which numbers a large portion of the most respectable Choctaws and Chickasaws, as well as our own population. I have been at this village a week at a time, without seeing anything like ardent spirits or a drunken Indian.

Armstrong described the Cherokees in his *Report* for 1842 as combining "more intelligence as a people than any of our tribes. . . . There are many intelligent and well educated Cherokees. Party strife has done much within a few years to retard the Cherokees, by creating divisions and factions between the people. . . ."

Of the Choctaws he wrote:

The Choctaws have long since acquired for themselves, not only from the Government of the United States, but from citizens with whom they have intercourse, a name of honesty and fidelity at least not surpassed by any of our Indian tribes. They have, by a steady attention to their own business since they emigrated to their present homes, greatly increased in wealth. . . . This favorable change is indicated more clearly on Red river than with that portion of the nation on the Arkansas.

Armstrong stated in 1842 that the Chickasaws had obtained greater pecuniary advantages by the exchange of their country than any other tribe. ". . . The funds thus obtained were invested for the benefit of the nation, after each head of a family had obtained a reservation." Regarding the Creeks he wrote: "The Creeks are more numerous than any of the tribes, numbering at least twenty thousand. Lately they have given better evidence of a disposition to encourage education than at any previous time. . . . They possess as much natural capacity as any of their red brethren. . . . I look upon the Creeks as the most powerful red people upon this frontier. . . ."

Armstrong gave an interesting account of the state of the Seminoles who had generally emigrated by 1842. "Unfortunately for the Seminoles, the chiefs of each party, as they land at or near Fort Gibson, endeavor to settle away from the others. This is done by the chiefs with a hope of keeping around them a party, of which they are the head, fearing that, if they become united, some other more favored leader will supersede them." He reported that the Osages had made little progress since his last report. The Senecas and mixed band of Senecas and Shawnees, with the Quapaws, were greatly inferior in numbers to the other tribes.⁵⁷

There was no limit to the trouble Armstrong had in getting the Seminoles to their own country. On May 22, 1843, he wrote from the Choctaw Agency that the late emigrant Seminoles had murdered the Negro interpreter at Webbers Falls, Cherokee Nation:⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 441, 438, 442-43, 445.

⁵⁸ Office Indian Affairs: Seminole File A 1457-1464. Choctaw Agcy. 1843. A-1457.

"The negro was lying down saying he was sleepy. Several Seminoles were also lying on the ground near him one observed to him that it was now a year since he had decoyed them into General Worth in Florida and as he was sleepy they would give him a long sleep, and immediately plunged several knives into him, they then buried him and told Mr. Judge that they had buried his Interpreter. . . .

"No other violence was offered. . . . The object being to kill the negro, which had been agreed upon doubtless before leaving Florida.

Agent Armstrong wrote to Colonel David Folsom from the Choctaw Agency, May 31, 1843.⁵⁹

The bearer Blacius [?] Hoover, is by profession a Baker he wishes to follow his trade at Doaksville—his services will probably be required by the Citizens—

Under, this belief I give him these few lines to you—authorizing him to dispose of his breadstuffs—

With the understanding that a failure to conduct himself with propriety—revokes this authority—"

It appears that Captain Armstrong had misunderstood the name of the man to whom he gave the letter. His name was Frederick Smith and he had a "peartner who is by the name of Hoover he wishes also to follow his trade at Fort Washetaw if he should like. . . he speaks broken and he wishes his name to be understood as Smith & Hoover." This letter was signed by S. D. Fisher who added a postscript that "He would have had the mistake corrected but left before Capt Armstrong got home."⁶⁰

An important change was made by the Choctaw people in 1843 when their legislative body was reorganized as the General Council with a Senate and House of Representatives. Superintendent Armstrong said: "What is chiefly remarkable in this, is the fact that the most populous district, which could have prevented the change, had the wisdom to forsee the bad consequences that might result from resistance, by arousing local and hereditary prejudices."

Armstrong wrote to Secretary Crawford of the improvement among his charges in regard to dress and noted the fact that more than half of the Indians were clothed in fabrics manufactured in their own homes. Traders exhibited great quantities of cloth woven by Choctaw women.

Many of the Choctaws had refused to abandon their comfortable homes in Mississippi and they declined to migrate until they had seen some of their tribesmen from the West and heard their accounts of conditions there. Armstrong finally took a delegation from among these Indians when he went to Mississippi to try to induce the Choctaws there to move. In his party was the old chief Nitakechi

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: I. T. Misc. Fred Smith Papers. 1843-4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

of Pushmataha District, who died November 22, 1845, in Lauderdale County, Mississippi, of pleurisy.⁶¹

From the Choctaw Agency West, November 3, 1843, Captain Armstrong confined his report to the schools in the Choctaw Nation and the "deep and increasing interest" manifested by them upon the subject of education. "These evidences clearly show that the Choctaws are improving, and, with the ample means now in a course of expenditure, will be able to educate the great mass of the nation." He wrote to Commissioner of Indian Affairs T. Hartley Crawford that the forty youths heretofore educated at Richard Johnson's Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, under the treaty of 1830, would in the future be divided among four of the principal colleges in the United States. The students were to be chosen with the idea of preparing them for teachers in Choctaw schools, after they had received a thorough classical education, and in order that they might be fitted to occupy prominent and useful posts among their people.⁶²

In 1847 a meeting was held at Skullyville where a collection of \$710 was taken up for the relief of victims of the Potato Famine in Ireland. Agent William Armstrong presided and contributions were made by traders, agency officials and missionaries, but the Indians gave the largest part of the money.⁶³

The Reverend William H. Goode, Superintendent of Fort Coffee Academy for Choctaw boys near Skullyville, in describing his missionary experiences in *Outposts of Zion* wrote that when he had his family arrived in the Choctaw country in 1843, they were visited and cordially received by Agent William Armstrong, who with J. H. Heald,⁶⁴ a prominent Indian trader at Skullyville, furnished them with teams and hands and supplied every "needed aid." Mr. Goode made the following remarks on William Armstrong and J. H. Heald:⁶⁵

The two gentlemen just referred to. . . . deserve to be ranked among the few who have maintained, in all their intercourse with the Indians, an unblemished reputation.

Major Armstrong was at native of Tennessee, and a brother of General Robert Armstrong, late Consul to Liverpool, and long the intimate friend of General Jackson. . . . Major Armstrong was one of "nature's Noblemen;" of commanding person and noble bearing; courteous, gentlemanly, and hospitable; with a soul that scorned the thought of profiting by a

⁶¹ *The Five Civilized Tribes, op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁶² J. Y. Bryce, comp., "About some of our first Schools in Choctaw Nation," Vol. 6, No. 3 (September, 1928), p. 359.

⁶³ Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* (Norman, 1934), p. 59; *Niles' Register*, Vol. LXXII (1847), p. 139.

⁶⁴ J. H. Heald was a member of the firm of Berthlet, Heald & Co. He was an eastern man. He resided at the agency and from the account of the Rev. Mr. Goode he was a humane and generous man who scorned to take advantage of the Indians.

⁶⁵ William H. Goode. *Outposts of Zion* (Cincinnati, 1864), p. 43.

mean act, whether at the expense of a white or red man. He was emphatically the friend of the Indian, and especially of the Choctaw; and as a result, he possessed their confidence and even affection in a very high degree. . . . Major Armstrong highly approved the educational movement among this people, encouraged missionary labor, and vigorously seconded every effort for their improvement. This much is due to the memory of the Indian's friend and protector, a worthy man and faithful public officer. . . .

In *Life Among the Choctaws*, the Reverend Henry C. Benson, teacher at Fort Coffee Academy, described his friends and neighbors and Skullyville.⁶⁶

Mr. Armstrong was a man of unblemished reputation, of excellent morals, and formerly had been a communicant of the Presbyterian Church. His family consisted of himself, two sons, a little daughter, Mr. Irwin, his clerk, and Mr. Wilson, the school-teacher. He had a son and daughter at college in the east. Mrs. Armstrong had died in Tennessee; the house-keepers were colored servants. Mr. Armstrong was a genuine and true friend of the Indians, and labored indefatigably to improve their condition in all respects. He gave his cordial approbation to all well-directed efforts to establish missions and schools in the several tribes under his superintendence.

Mr. Wilson, the teacher, was a graduate of the Washington College, Pennsylvania; he was appointed Principal of Spencer Academy, where he served some time, after which he received the appointment of Agent for the Choctaws.

Such were our neighbors when we commenced our labors at Fort Coffee. They were kind, sociable, well-disposed, and pleasant in their intercourse with us, but they were not pious.

Mr. Benson gave another description of life at Fort Coffee Academy and of the work of Agent William Armstrong.⁶⁷

About the middle of December Major Armstrong received at Fort Coffee sixty thousand dollars in specie, to be paid over to several Indian agents, to be distributed as annuities to the tribes embraced in that superintendency. It has been boxed and officially sealed at the New Orleans mint, each box containing one thousand dollars.

The boat had come late in the afternoon, and the boxes of coins were delivered to Mr. Armstrong, at our mission, about sunset; but, before it was possible to bring a wagon and horses to remove the treasure, a messenger arrived from the Agency with the sad intelligence that Mr. Irwin, the brother-in-law of Mr. Armstrong, was dying. He must go at once to the bedside of his dying friend; but it was impossible to carry the money with him, for its weight was over two tuns *avoirdupois*. . . . It would not be secure in the hands of his servants; for the Cherokee and Choctaw Indians knew of its arrival, and might be tempted to take possession of it. . . .

After consultation it was thought proper to convey the money up the hill and deposit it in the little log office, and appoint H. C. Benson to guard it till morning. Now, it must be remembered that the office was scarcely six feet high, built of small logs, had a frail door and window, and was covered with "shakes," or clapboards. . . .

⁶⁶ Henry C. Benson, *Life Among the Choctaws* (Cincinnati, 1860), pp. 99-100.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-74.

The arrangement was made, and Mr. Armstrong went to the bedside of his dying friend. I was placed on duty. To guard such a treasure was a responsibility of no trifling character, especially in so frail a castle. It was necessary to be armed, but, . . . the only weapons from which a choice could be made were the old ax, with which the cook split his wood for the stove, and the shot-gun, with which I had sometimes amused myself shooting rabbits. The former was thought to be the most available, and consequently selected. A fire was kindled in the chimney, a mattress and blankets spread on the floor, the door locked, and the ax placed in a convenient position. After reading two or three hours I lay down, with my head in close proximity to a box which contained five thousand dollars in gold, and there I slept soundly till sunrise in the morning. On waking up I made diligent examination and found myself and the money all on hand; the robbers had not come.

From the Choctaw Agency, Agent Armstrong wrote his friend, Major John Henry who was in New Orleans, the letter dated April 11, 1844, and addressed in care of Walton & Sheafe, New Orleans. Major John Henry was a member of the firm of Cunningham and Henry of Van Buren, Arkansas, and he was probably in the "Crescent City" buying goods for the mercantile establishment. The two boys mentioned in this letter—David and Frank—were the sons of William Armstrong:⁶⁸

Dear Majr.

I fear you will begin to think me troublesome—but you informed me you would be in New Orleans for some time—a man must expect to be troubled by his friends—

I want about 7yds of blue Cottonade . . . for pantaloons for myself—You know what I want. Also two hats for David & Frank good and cheap as decent hats—something like the one I sent for myself—one that will fit you large for David—and a smaller one for Frank—also two Barrels of sugar, & a sack of Coffee with three sacks of salt for my plantation.

I would as soon ship on the Evelina as any boat—but do as you please.

I have no news things go about as usual—Wishing you and Mrs. H. a pleasant summer's visit

I remain your friend

Maj. John Henry

W. Armstrong.

In his voluminous *Report* of October 1, 1844, Armstrong wrote of the Quapaws who were under his charge, living in the Choctaw country:⁶⁹

The Quapaws, who once owned the greater part of the present State of Arkansas, and made good their possession against the incursions of the Osages and other warlike bands, are now reduced to less than 400. Nearly half of them drag out a wretched existence on the waters of Red river, in a country they occupy by permission of the Choctaws. The principal part of them live in their proper homes in the Neosho sub-agency, on a small tract northeast of the confluence of the Neosho and Pomme de-Terre rivers. Here various efforts have been made to improve their condition—so far, with little success. . . .

⁶⁸ Autograph letter in Grant Foreman Collection in a package of letters sent him by Miss Clara Eno, Van Buren, Arkansas, and rescued by her when a large building was razed in the town.

⁶⁹ *Report*, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1844, pp. 323, 326, 454-55.

A large group of Choctaws who had remained in Mississippi had recently moved west and settled in the Indian Territory. Agent Armstrong referred to this group of Choctaws in his *Report to T. Hartley Crawford*, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated September 30, 1845:

One of the principal events that has occurred in the western superintendency during the past year, is the arrival of 1,200 Choctaws from Mississippi, being a portion of those who remained in their former country after its cession. . . . Fortunately, Congress, by directing the investment of one-half of all that may be due the Mississippi Choctaws for reservations, has secured them an income sufficient to place them on an equal footing with the rest of the tribe.

So far those who have emigrated appear to be entirely satisfied with their new location. Many of them have expressed great gratification at the signs of improvement everywhere visible among the Choctaws west. . . .

The *Southern Reformer*, Jackson, Mississippi, February 16, 1846, stated that "600 and odd Choctaws under Gen. Armstrong passed through there on their way west last Saturday. Some 400 crossed Pearl River a few miles above Jackson and will meet at Vicksburg to take a steamer boat on the Mississippi River" and shortly after reach their wild home in the far West.

The *Arkansas Intelligencer* announced on August 30, 1845 that the Choctaw annuity had been paid in Moo-sha-la-tubbee (*sic*) District on the twenty-seventh and that Captain Armstrong would pay the Chickasaws at their council ground near Fort Washita on September 8. The Choctaw payment in Push-ma-to-ha (*sic*) District at Running Water on the eighteenth or twentieth and the Puck-sha-nubbee (*sic*) District near Doaksville on the twenty-third or twenty-fourth.

A noted school for boys was opened on December 2, 1845, named "Armstrong Academy" by the Choctaws for their great friend and agent, William Armstrong. The name alone should have been an inspiration to the lads who were educated there for much of the advancement of their people had been promoted through the interest and good offices of Agent Armstrong. The academy had been established by the Choctaw Council in 1844, and the location selected in the western part of Pushmataha District, about three miles northeast of the present town of Bokchita, in Bryan County.⁷⁰

The Reverend Ramsay D. Potts, a Baptist missionary who had established Providence Mission in 1836, among the Choctaws south-east of present Hugo in Choctaw County, was selected to serve as Superintendent of Armstrong Academy. The American Indian Mission Association (Baptist) paid a third of the expenses while the Choctaw Nation bore the remainder of the cost of operation. Superintendent Potts wrote to Captain Armstrong on September 1, 1845,

⁷⁰ W. B. Morrison, "Old Philadelphia Baptist Church," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (September, 1935), pp. 266-7.

stating that the school was located "two miles south of the road leading from Fort Towson to Fort Washita, fifty-five miles west of the former and thirty east of the latter. . . ." This location was about three miles northeast of present Bokchito in Bryan County. Armstrong Academy became a center of educational affairs for the Choctaws for many years. The trustees of the institution at the time of its opening were Agent William Armstrong, Peter P. Pitchlynn, George W. Harkins, Thompson McKenney and Robert M. Jones.⁷¹

Agent Armstrong's *Report*, dated October 20, 1846, treated *Education* as the principal subject. He was particularly encouraged by the interest the Choctaws were displaying in having their daughters gain an education. Some years ago, the late venerable Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton, a one-eighth Choctaw, described William Armstrong to the writer. She attended New Hope Academy⁷² near Skullyville when a young girl and so had an opportunity to see the Agent. She said that he "was a tall, light-complected man: had kind of auburn hair who wore a moustache and 'sideburns' for a while. He was a nice man to do business with. The Choctaws all like him and respected him highly."

Armstrong had reported to the Commissioner in 1844 that conditions among the Chickasaws were improving:⁷³

For nearly two hundred miles on the main travelled road from Missouri and northwestern Ark's to the N. and N-west section of Texas, emigrants and travellers depend entirely for subsistence and forage upon Indians of this tribe, generally the full blood. Their cabins usually constructed by themselves, are generally sheltered by shade trees, and in situations chosen with a degree of taste and a regard for comfort not always found among frontier settlers. At several of their homes I saw looms and spinning-wheels of their own manufacture, some of them made by self-taught mechanics. . . .

Superintendent Armstrong wrote to Washington that he and the Agent to the Chickasaws (Upshaw) were convinced of the determination of a majority of the Chickasaws to "restore the old and long since abandoned system of government by hereditary chiefs . . . to benefit a few designing persons." In a speech King Ish to ho to pa had declared that he was their king, that he had been born so and would remain king until his death, though he was willing to abdicate

⁷¹ For an account of Armstrong Academy see James W. Moffitt, "Early History of Armstrong Academy," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (March, 1943), pp. 88-91. It is interesting to note that four of the Choctaw trustees—Pitchlynn, Harkins, McKenney and Jones—had been students at the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, and it shows the dependence of the Indians on that school to fill important posts in the various nations.

⁷² Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "New Hope Academy," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1944), p. 278.

⁷³ Office Indian Affairs: Western Supt'y File A 1911. Armstrong to Crawford. This road led southwest to Fort Gibson and Honey Springs, and crossed the Canadian River at North Fork Town.

if they wished. The Colbert faction would not agree to this and he was confirmed as king to preside over all councils of the Chickasaws.

For the purpose of dividing their annuities the Chickasaw Nation had been divided into four companies back in Mississippi headed by Tishomingo, McGilvery, Alberson and Thomas Seeley. Edmund Pickens was now (1845) appointed second controlling chief to act as treasurer and handle all of the tribal funds. Pitman Colbert wrote Superintendent Armstrong of the recent council and said, "we have placed our friend Edmund Pickens in the same situation as my old uncle Levi Colbert was in the old Chickasaw Nation." He added that his uncle was impoverished by the great number of Indians who visited him and were fed at his table. Pickens would have similar calls upon his hospitality and it was hoped that a salary would be provided so that he might be able to assume the burden. Armstrong refused to recognize the officers chosen and paid it to the individual citizens as usual. He expressed himself deeply interested in their plans for a manual labor school projected by the Methodist Church for the Chickasaws were in a better position to provide for education than most of the Indian tribes.

According to the report of the Commissioner of Indian affairs for 1844, Major William Armstrong and General Matthew Arbuckle were largely occupied in inducing the Seminoles to remove to the part of the Creek territory which had been assigned to them. Commissioner Crawford wrote Superintendent Armstrong June 17, 1844, that Roley McIntosh, Ufalla Hadjo, and Benjamin Marshall had expressed hostility to the separation of their landed interests which would require great delicacy and care to overcome.

John D. Bemo, Seminole teacher and missionary, opened his school at Prospect Hill in the western Creek Nation on March 15, 1944 with forty students present. The Indians were under the impression that the children would be boarded in the school, and when they realized that was not the plan, they began to leave the school until it was reduced to fifteen, at which number it continued. They were all boys; "eight of them are in two syllables, one in three, and six are in their 'ab's.'" ⁷⁴ Thomas L. Judge, sub-agent for the Seminoles wrote to Major William Armstrong, superintendent Indian Affairs, Western Territory, that Bemo's course had fully sustained the good opinion his friends had formed of him. A marked change in the habits and manners of the Indians immediately in the neighborhood of his school had taken place. ⁷⁵

Superintendent Armstrong ended his *Report* for 1844 in a happy mood by stating: ". . . it gives me great pleasure to be able to state that I have the utmost confidence in the fidelity of the

⁷⁴ *Report*, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1844, p. 374.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 472-3.

incorrect
date

different tribes in this superintendency, and that, in my opinion, the government could safely rely upon them as efficient allies in the event of a rupture with any foreign power." This statement presaged the war with Mexico two years later.

Not long after the establishment of the Texas Republic both Texas and Mexico had made persistent efforts to embroil the southwestern Indians in their quarrel, and Sam Houston, then president of the Republic of Texas, used his friendship with the Cherokees and Creeks to enlist their strength on the side of Texas against Mexico. A letter from Houston in the hands of a Creek chief was once intercepted and Armstrong sent a copy to Washington, with a report on May 10, 1837 from the Choctaw Agency, in which he wrote:⁷⁶

The Creeks as well as Cherokees have a great disposition to engage in the contest between the Texans and Mexicans, and there is those amongst them, more especially with the Cherokees who are secretly encouraging such a design. It is calculated to operate injuriously upon the Indians, to have anything to do with this contest, thereby withdrawing them from their proper pursuits, and calculated to alienate their confidence from the Government of the United States."

In his *Report* for 1845, Superintendent William Armstrong stated: "A vexed and perplexing question was happily settled by the treaty made with the Creeks and Seminoles in January last. . . . The great body of the Seminoles have removed to the waters of Little river, a stream emptying into the Canadian, a hundred miles above its mouth. So far, the accounts from them have been favorable . . . they are erecting cabins, and preparing to make fields in time to plant corn in the spring. . . ." Armstrong further stated that the Creeks had gradually extended their settlements from their first locations near the mouth of the Verdigris and Grand rivers, until they had reached the Cross Timbers.⁷⁷

On January 4, 1845 a treaty between the United States, the Creeks and Seminoles was concluded at the Creek Agency. It was signed by William Armstrong. Cherokee Agent Pierce M. Butler, Creek Agent James Logan and Thomas L. Judge, Seminole agent. The witnesses were Benjamin Marshall and John Dillard. This document was proclaimed by President James K. Polk after it was ratified by the senate on March 6, 1845.

Superintendent Armstrong was deeply concerned because of the frequent incursions made into the Creek territory by bands of Pawnees of the Platte for the purpose of horse stealing. The settlers were in little danger but alarm was felt as far as the mouth of the Verdigris River. Troops were detached from Fort Gibson and Fort Washita when requested by the authorities for the relief of the people.

⁷⁶ Grant Foreman, *Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest* (Cleveland, 1926), p. 232.

⁷⁷ For a history of this forest, see Carolyn Thomas, *The Cross Timbers* (Muskegon, 1947).

The life of Superintendent Armstrong was anything but peaceful as there was almost constant trouble within the different tribes. The Cherokees were greatly upset because of the decision of the council that the salines were to revert to the nation with the exception to the one granted to Sequoyah by the treaty of 1828. Some of the "Old Settlers" had established salt plants on which they had expended large sums and as the new law deprived them of the property loud complaints were heard. Captain John Rogers, one of the chiefs of the "Old Settlers," and operator of the Grand Saline, called a meeting in September, 1844, at Tahlontuskee, where it was planned to memorialize the United States government for relief. When the authorities of the nation learned of the proposed meeting they attempted to prevent it claiming that it was the intention to divide the Cherokees and overthrow the government. Armstrong was successful in prevailing upon the "Old Settlers" to abandon the meeting and thus prevent a renewal of bloodshed.⁷⁸

Superintendent Armstrong's *Report* for 1844, which included interesting accounts of the Delawares, Shawnees, Kickapoos, Miamis, Quapaws and Caddoes, had this to say about the Cherokees:

Their affairs are still in an unsettled state.—The party feelings which have so long divided them, far from subsiding, appear rather to increase in violence. A number of "the treaty" have lately gone to the north-western section of Texas, for the purpose of exploring the country, with a view to their ultimate emigration and separation from the rest of the tribe. The result of this expedition will doubtless have a material bearing on the final settlement of the Cherokee question.

The Cherokees were still contending in 1846, when Superintendent Armstrong was appointed on a committee composed of Albion K. Parris, Edmund Burke and himself to make any new arrangements which would heal all dissensions. *The Cherokee Advocate* referred to Captain William Armstrong several times in 1846: "On January 8, the 'Treaty Party' delegation with Armstrong, John Watie, the Reverend John Huss and two other members left for Washington. On January 29, Captain Armstrong was reported in Mississippi helping in the removal of the Choctaws, and he was said to be in Jackson, Mississippi on March 19. He was again in Washington on August 6 when John Drew and William Shorey Coodey were also in the capital."

The Commission labored at Washington through July but it was not until August 7, 1846, that the treaty between the United States and the Cherokee Indians was ratified by one vote.⁷⁹ William Armstrong was a signer, as one of the three commissioners on the

⁷⁸ *The Five Civilized Tribes, op. cit.*, pp. 30-4, 45 (note 33), 68-9, 72, 107, 110 (note 2), 165-66, 187, 331-2.

⁷⁹ Wardell, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 75. This did not end the trouble between the Cherokee factions; they were aroused again during the Civil War and feeling still persists between the descendants of the different parties in Oklahoma.

part of the government. Cherokee signers were Chief John Ross and eight prominent members of the tribe who were delegates duly appointed by the constituted authorities of the nation. The "Treaty Party" was represented by six members while the old Settlers or Western Cherokees had five delegates.⁸⁰

The Cherokee Advocate on August 27, 1846 (p. 3, col. 3), printed on item from the *Van Buren Intelligencer*, to the effect that Armstrong would shortly return from Washington, bringing over \$200,000, general annuities and contingent funds of the Indian Department for that superintendency.

When Superintendent William Armstrong died at Doaksville in June, 1847, a large meeting of Choctaws and others was held in this village on the 15th of the month, for the purpose of making some public expression of their feelings in regard to the death of their old friend and agent. On motions of Capt. Eastman Loman, U. S. Interpreter, Colonel David Folsom was called to the chair, and Lewis Garland appointed secretary. After an appropriate prayer from the Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury, the Chairman arose and explained the purpose of the meeting in substantially the following words:⁸¹

We have met to express our respect for our departed friend, and mingle our sympathies with the tears of the bereaved children and relatives. I, being a Choctaw, would be glad to say a few words about the character of him whose death has this day called us together, but my command of the English language is not sufficient to permit me to say all I could wish.

In the year 1810 I first knew Frank [Francis C.] Armstrong. He has since been our Agent. His bones rest in our land. In the year 1831, in carrying out our treaty, Major Frank Armstrong and his brother WILLIAM were appointed to take a survey of the farms and improvements of the Choctaws. This duty they discharged faithfully and to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. After that they were associated in removing the Choctaws to their present homes. Then we Choctaws became well acquainted with them both. I, being at that time at the head of a party, had an opportunity of knowing the operations of Major William Armstrong. Though he was in the rear of my party he frequently came up to see how we were getting on. He felt deeply interested for us. He was careful to do every thing he could to make our wives and little ones comfortable. He saw us settle in our homes.

His brother Frank, was our first Agent in this country. A short time passed, and, as I have already said, death removed him from us.

Major William Armstrong was appointed in 1835. He came among us with his family. But a few months passed and his wife fell under the cold hand of death. My friends, but few of us know the loss we sustained in the death of Mrs. Armstrong. She was an excellent woman. The sympathies of her heart flowed out to the Choctaws,—to the poor Choctaw women. No one ever came to her house to whom she did not extend the hand of charity, and cause them to feel that in her they had a friend. Not a few shed tears over her grave.

⁸⁰ Emmett Starr, *History of the Cherokee Indians* (Oklahoma City, 1921), p. 137.

⁸¹ *The Arkansas Intelligencer*, June 26, 1847, p. 3, cols. 1 & 2.

Major William Armstrong has since died among us,—our father and our friend. I think I may safely say that I give expression to the feelings of the Choctaw people when I say he was our father. He ever manifested a lively interest in our welfare. He always gave us good counsel,—never bad. He never saw a Choctaw in difficulty but he rendered assistance by counsel and advice. Whenever there was a dispute between a Choctaw and a white man, he always satisfactorily adjusted it.

As children inquire for their father when absent and long for his return, so when business called our Agent from the Nation, the Choctaws missed him, and the inquiry was frequent, "Where is Armstrong?"—"When will he return?" He was truly our leader, our friend, our father.

He was an honest man. We Choctaws loved him for his honesty. Whenever a man went to him for information he gave all that he could. There have frequently been Agents who would run away with Indian money, or, in paying it over, keep back a part. But not so with our departed friend. Every thing was straight. All the money was paid as it should be.

I regret very much that I did not visit him more frequently during his illness. When I did see him he manifested a deep interest in the welfare of my people. He exclaimed the chief desire of any man should be "to act honorably in all things and prepare for the world to come." He paused. Again he exclaimed "to act honorably in all things and prepare for the world to come." This to me was good preaching, and I think it should be to all.

After the Chairman concluded his remarks, a committee of five was appointed to prepare resolutions expressing the sentiments of the meeting. The committee retired a few moment then presented the following preamble and resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

Whereas it has pleased Almighty God in his wise and holy Providence, to remove by death, Maj. WILLIAM ARMSTRONG, the late Superintendent of the Western Territory, and Agent for the Choctaws—therefore

Resolved—First, That we hereby tender our warmest sympathies to the bereaved children and other relatives of the deceased, for the great and irreparable loss they have sustained by the death of their honored father and relative.

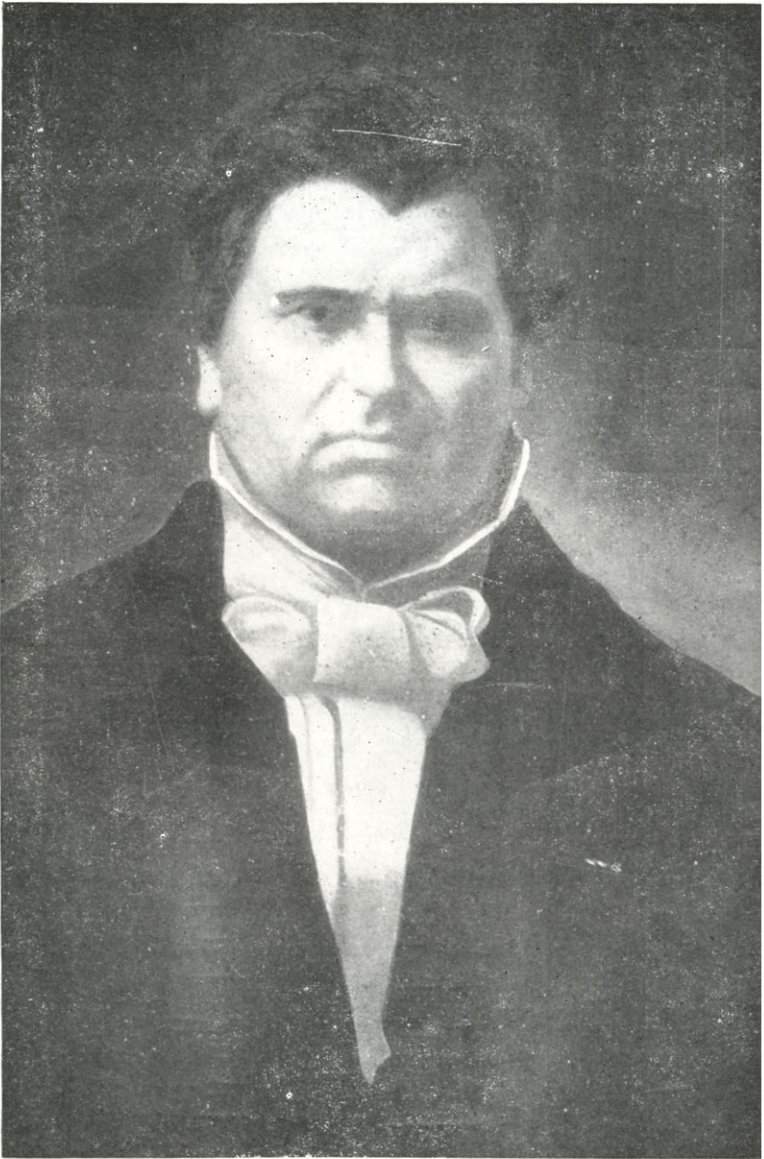
Second, That on this occasion we consider it our privilege to express our convictions of the high qualifications and eminent services of the deceased as a public officer, and especially as Superintendent of the Western Territory and Agent for the Choctaws.

Third, That with poignant sorrow we sincerely mourn the death of our father and Agent.

Fourth, That we gratefully record our testimony to the deep interest manifested by Major Armstrong in the cause of education and general improvement among all the Indian tribes, and especially to his successful and persevering efforts in behalf of the Seminaries recently established among the Choctaws and those about to be established among the Creeks and other Indians.

Fifth, That we gratefully remember the happy and successful efforts of our late lamented Agent to promote the peace and allay the dissensions among the Choctaws and other Indian tribes.

Sixth, That the friends of the deceased in the Choctaw Nation wear crape on the left arm for thirty days.



(Painting, Oklahoma Historical Society)

DAVID FOLSOM

First Elected Choctaw Chief, under Choctaw Constitution, 1826

Seventh, That a copy of these resolutions be presented to the family of the deceased and to the President of the United States.

Eighth, That the proceedings of this meeting be published in the *Van Buren Intelligencer*, the *Cherokee Advocate*, and the *Washington Telegraph*.

The published Minutes of this meeting, signed by "D. Folsom, President," and "L. Garland, Secretary," state that the meeting⁸² closed with an "address to the Father of mercies" by the Reverend J. H. Carr, veteran Methodist missionary to the Choctaws and Chickasaws.⁸³

David Folsom who wrote the resolutions about William Armstrong was a man with a kindly heart who appreciated the wise care given to the Choctaws by the Agent until the day of his death. Folsom was born in the old Choctaw Nation on January 25, 1791, the son of Nathaniel Folsom and Ai-ni-chi- ho- yo who was a descendant of a line of Choctaw chiefs. David Folsom served under Jackson in the Indian war and was present at the taking of Pensacola.

After the Removal of the Indian Territory, he was instrumental in having missionaries sent among the Choctaws, and he was always interested in education although he had only a few years schooling himself. He was a delegate to Washington a number of times and served as chief many years. His wife was Rhoda Nail, a half-blood Choctaw and they had a large family, the members of which were influential in the nation. Chief Folsom was buried in the old Fort Towson cemetery and his monument bears the following inscription: "To the memory of David Folsom, the first Republican Chief of the Choctaw Nation. The promoter of industry, education, religion and morality; was born January 25, 1791 and departed this life September 24th, 1847. Age 56 years and eight months. 'He being dead yet speaketh!'"⁸⁴

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ J. Y. Bryce, compiler, "Some Notes of Interest Concerning Early Operations in the Indian Territory by Methodist Church South," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (September, 1927), pp. 233-5.

The Reverend John H. Carr of the Methodist Church South served the Doaksville Mission for a period of six years. In 1851 he was placed in charge of Red River African Mission. At the conference of 1852 he was appointed superintendent of Bloomfield Academy where he remained in charge for sixteen years. During the Civil War he showed great skill in keeping together the members of his church and the students. He was born April 16, 1812 at Lebanon, Tennessee.

⁸⁴ Czarina C. Conlan, "David Folsom," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IV, No. 4, pp. 340-355. The above epitaph was written by the Rev. Cyrus Byington, a devoted friend and admirer of David Folsom. H. B. Cushman in his *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians* (Greenville, Texas, 1899) devotes several pages to Folsom's history and he prints four letters written by him from the eastern Choctaw Nation. In William Armstrong's report for 1842 (p. 438), he wrote that the salt works carried on by Colonel David Folsom, a Choctaw of respectability and energy, "were more extensive than the one other such works in that nation. About twenty bushels a day are manufactured—a supply equal to the demand, which, no doubt, will be increased as the article is wanted."